

OPENING of Greek Hall

Archmandrite Cyril - Administrator for the Greek Orthodox Church of Southern Africa, Your Excellency, Chargé d'Affairs for Greece, Mr. Mayor, Mrs de Bruyn, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Steyl - guests.

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We are indeed indebted to you all today for being present at this great and memorable event of the Hellenic Community of Alberton.

You are undoubtedly all aware of ~~all~~ the great efforts that were made to achieve our goal, however, with the aid of one and all it has been accomplished and hence our gathering here today.

Although, this building can be looked upon as yet another public amenity may I take the liberty of asking you to also look upon it as being symbolic of a number of factors.

First and foremost it is symbolic of the freedom and encouragement available to each group in South Africa to retain its own language, culture and creed and in so doing enabling the best of each culture to be assimilated into the South African culture and so build a better and wiser nation.

It is also symbolic in this instance of the contentment of the South African Greeks who, in erecting buildings of this nature portray the fact that they are quite willing to plant deep and sincere roots in their adopted homeland.

Narrowing our outlook to that of Alberton - this building is symbolic of the harmony existing between the various groups. We have been allowed to build our Community Centre in the heart of the town - a more central and appropriate spot could not be found in Alberton. The fact that the ground upon which this building is erected was donated by the Town Council and that the adjoining ground was made available for purchase - portrays these facts of encouragement, co-operation and harmony amongst various groups.

Let us look at the reasons as to why the Greek Community erected this particular Communal Centre here in Alberton.

First and foremost this centre has been erected so that the Greek Immigrants and the South African Greeks by descent can preserve their heritage - after all - any immigrant who comes to South Africa with the intention of making it his new homeland and who is not proud of his heritage, I am sure ladies and gentlemen, such a person would not become a worthy citizen of our country. - Let us not forget that South Africa encourages us and grants us the freedom to retain our heritage.

Next is the great influx of immigrants. The Greek speaking population is increasing continuously in great numbers and it is anticipated in view of the rapid industrial, commercial and residential development of Alberton that our community will be augmented not only by immigrants settling within our borders but also by the movement of Greeks already resident in South Africa and coming to settle in Alberton. Moreover the geographical situation of Alberton - that is its central situation will allow Greeks from other towns to use this centre.

It is our intention to create facilities for immigrants to be taught in both official languages. This together with the fact that they will be able to associate more easily with the Greeks who have long established themselves

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in South Africa will enable these immigrants to make their social readjustment in their new homeland with the minimum difficulties and consequently we will be able to ensure that we mould citizens who will be an asset to our country.

At this stage, ladies and gentlemen - I wish to repeat a statement that I have made on numerous occasions and that is - that although this is the Alberton Hellenic Community Centre - it is at the disposal of all the residents of Alberton - it is not confined to the use of the Greek speaking members of ^{the} Alberton section only. There are a number of the representatives of various cultural and other organisations here today and I ~~trust~~ ask them to please make a sincere note of this fact.

I trust that our friends will be as proud of this centre as we are. I trust your Worship that we have met with the expectations of your council.

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Dit is vir my 'n besondere voorreg om u almal vandag hier te verwelkom by die opening van ons Griekse Sentrum.

Soos u weet, was ons feitlik verplig om hierdie sentrum so spoedig moontlik op te rig, aangesien daar ~~so~~ vandag soveel Grieke hierheen immigrer.

Dit is die plig van elke Grieks sprekende Suid Afrikaner, sowel as die ander Griekse inwoners wie reeds Suid Afrika hulle tuiste gemaak het, om hierdie nuwe immigrante so spoedig moontlik en met so min ongerief moontlik te assimileer. Ons voornemens is om klasse te gee in albei offisiële tale om sodoende hierdie immigrante die geleentheid te gee om hulle beter aan te pas. Ons doel is om hulle nie net te laat tuis voel nie, maar ons wil hê hulle moet 'n aanwins wees vir hulle nuwe tuisland.

Ek is oortuig daarvan dat hierdie saal 'n aanwins sal wees, nie net vir die Griekse gemeenskap nie maar ook vir die hele gemeenskap van Alberton. Ek wil dit weereens beklemtoon, dames en here, dat hierdie saal nie net tot die beskikking van die Griekse gemeenskap sal wees nie maar tot die beskikking van die gemeenskap van Alberton. Ons bring dit ook onder die aandag van die verteenwoordigers van die verskillende organisasies, wat vandag hier verteenwoordig word.

Ons voel trots hierop, meneer die Burgemeester, en ek is seker dat u saam met ons trots voel om hierdie sentrum wat eintlik $\frac{1}{2}$ vereiste was, hier te kon oprig.

Ek wil u een en almal wie bygedra het en dit moontlik gemaak het om ons doel en ideaal te bereik, hartelik bedank en ek wil die hoop uitspreek dat die vriendskapsbande tussen ons Afrikaans ~~sprekende~~ Engels sprekende vriende steeds sterker sal word in die toekoms.

Πανοσιολογιώτατε.

Ἐξοχώτατε Ἐπιτετραμμένε.

Κυρίες καὶ Κύριοι.

Εἶμαι πολὺ συγκινημένος πού ἦλθατε νά συνεορτάσωμεν, τὰ ἐγκαλνία τῆς Νέας Κοινοτικῆς Ἑστίας τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ.

Πιστεύσατε Ἀγαπητοί μου, ὅτι ἐσεῖς, καὶ ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς πολιτισμὸς, μᾶς δώσατε τὸ θάρρος καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, νά κτίσωμεν αὐτὸ τὸ Κτίριον.

Αὐτὸ τὸ ἔργον πού βλέπετε, ἔγινε μέ μεγάλους κόπους καὶ φροντίδες, ἀλλὰ ὁ ἐρχομὸς σας ἐδῶ, μᾶς δίδει τὸ "Εὖγε" πού ξεχνᾶμεν τοὺς κόπους μας, καὶ μᾶς γεμίζει μέ χαράν, ὅτι ἐπετελέσαμεν τὸ καθήκον μας, πρὸς τὸν Ἑλληνισμόν, ὅπως τὸ ὑποσχέθημεν.

Δέν δύναμαι νά ἐκφράσω τὴν μεγάλην εὐγνωμοσύνην, πού αἰσθάνομαι πρὸς τὴν Νέα μας Πατρίδα Δ. Ν. Α, πού τὸ πολίτευμα μᾶς δίδει, τὴν Ἐλευθερία πνευματικῆς Ἑθνικῆς δράσεως, πού σκοπὸν ἔχει, νά διδάξωμεν τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν μας γλῶσσαν, τὴν ὀρθόδοξον χριστιανικὴν θρησκείαν, καὶ τὴν δοξασμένην ἱστορίαν μας, διὰ τὴν κοινωνικὴν μας ἀξιοπρέπεια, πρὸς γενικὰ συμφέροντα.

Γνωστοποιῶ ὅτι τὰ 75% τῆς ἀξίας τοῦ Κτιρίου συνέβαλον οἱ ξένες ἐθνικότητες, κατόπιν βεβαίως τῶν ἐνεργειῶν μας.

Ἐλπίζω ὅτι τώρα πού βλέπετε αὐτὸ τὸ ἐθνικὸν ἔργον, ἐσεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες, θά μᾶς βοηθήσητε χρηματικῶς μέ μεγαλεῖτερον ἐνδιαφέρον.

Τὸ κτίριον ἐστοίχισε μόνον 55.000 χιλ. ράντ. Ἡ δέ πραγματικὴν ἀξία του, εἶναι 100.000. χιλ. ράντ. Τοῦτο ὀφείλεται εἰς τὴν ἀκούραστον ἐνέργειάν μας.

Ἀγαπητοί μου:

Ἐκφράζω τὰς εὐχαριστήσεις μου, πρὸς τοὺς ἀξιοτίμους καὶ σεβαστοὺς συμβούλους μου, πού μέ μεγάλην εὐχαρίστησιν συνέβαλον διὰ τὴν ἀνέγερσιν τοῦ Κτιρίου, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἀγαπητὰ μέλη τῆς Κοινότητος.

Ἐπίσης αἰσθάνομαι ὑποχρεωμένος, εἰς τὸν ἀπελθόνταν ἐξοχώτατον Ἐπιτετραμμένον κ. Μολυβιάτην, διὰ τὸ ψυχολογικὸ θάρρος πού μοῦ ἔδιδε, ἵνα ἐπιτελεσθῇ τὸ ἐθνικὸν μας ἔργον.

Ἀπὸ τοὺς μεγάλους ὑποστηρικτάς μας, πού ἀντελήφθησαν εὐθύς ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὸν ἱερὸν σκοπὸν μας, καὶ μᾶς ἐβοήθησαν ἡθικῶς καὶ ὑλικῶς, εἶναι οἱ ἰδιοκτῆται τοῦ ἐργοστασίου Γιουνίβα οἱ ἀδελφοί κ.κ. Θέμελη καὶ κ. Φραγκῆσκος, τοὺς ὁποίους εὐχαριστοῦμεν θερμῶς, καθὼς καὶ τὸ προσωπικὸν τῆς ἐταιρείας.

Δέν παύω νά ἐκδηλώνω τὴν εὐχαρίστησίν μου, εἰς τὸν ἐντιμότατον καὶ ἀγαπητὸν σύμβουλον κ. Π. Καλυβίτην, διὰ τὴν προθυμίαν νά ἐπιτελέσῃ ὀλόκληρον τὴν ἡλεκτρικὴν ἐγκατάστασιν τοῦ Κτιρίου ἐντελῶς δωρεάν.

Εἶναι ἄξιος θερμῶν συγχαρητηρίων.

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Ἰδιαιτέρως μοῦ ἔκαμεν τεραστίαν ἐντύπωσιν ἡ ἐθελοντικήν ἐξυπηρετήσεις, τοῦ Νεομετανάστου ἐπιπλοποιοῦ κ. Μιχαήλ Πατσῆ, ὁ ὅποῖος μέ μεγάλην προθυμίαν ἀνέλαβεν καί ἐτελεώσε, σχεδόν ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου, ὅλην τήν ξυλουργικήν ἐργασία τοῦ Κτιρίου, ἐντελῶς καί αὐτός δωρεάν.

Ἐργαζόμενος δέ, μετὰ τὰς ἐργασίμους ὥρας τῆς ἐργασίας του, καθημερινῶς. - Εἶναι ἄξιος παντός ἐπαίνου καί ὑποστηρίξεως.

Ἐπίσης εὐχαριστοῦμεν θερμῶς τοὺς σεβαστοὺς ἐκδότας, τῶν ἐδῶ Ἑλληνικῶν ἐφημερίδων, ποῦ πάντοτε μᾶς βοηθοῦν διὰ τὰ ἐθνικά μας ἔργα.

Διὰ τὰ ἐξελισσόμενα γεγονότα τῆς Ἀγαπημένης μας Πατρίδος, εὐχομαι εἰς τόν Παντοδύναμον Θεόν, ὅπως φωτίσει τοὺς σεβαστοὺς Κυβερνήτας, ἵνα φανοῦν ἄξιοι τῶν δοξασμένων ἄξιοπρεπῶς Προγόνων μας.

Πάντως μέσα εἰς τήν σκέψιν μας, πτερουγίζουν, τὰ πνεύματα τῆς δοξασμένης δράσεως τοῦ Λεωνίδα, τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους, τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου, καί τοῦ Ἐθνικοῦ Κυβερνήτη Ἰωάννου Μεταξᾶ.

Καί τώρα ὅλοι μαζί ἄς εὐχηθῶμεν:

Ζήτω τό Ἑλληνικόν Ἔθνος.

Ζήτω ἡ Δημοκρατία τῆς Νοτίου Ἀφρικῆς.

Ἀπό τὰ ἐνγκαίνια τῆς Κοινοτικῆς Ἑστίας.

Ἀλμπερτον τῆ 2- 12- 1967.

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Your Excellency, Chargé d'Affairs - I feel that it is only just that certain names have to be mentioned here this afternoon.

First and foremost I thank the Town Council for having ~~submitted~~ donated this ground upon which the centre is built and for having made the adjoining half acre available for purchase.

I mention our Town Clerk, Mr. Lötter for his co-operation, especially during the difficulties we encountered with the Department of Community Development in obtaining our building permit.

Secondly - Messrs. S & C Themelis and Fraskiskos and the executive staff of Univa Metal Works for having donated all the stoves, ovens together with all cast iron piping and sanitary-ware that is manufactured in their local factory. I must add Sir, that it is not only the value of the gift which matters but the encouragement and treatment that was afforded to me each and every time I had occasion to visit their factory.

I wish to thank Messrs. L. Suzman for their generous donation that was made to us - I thank Messrs. United Tobacco for their support in the past.

The Brick Corporation of South Africa is thanked for their generous donation - especially Mr. Richards who unfortunately cannot be with us today.

Messrs. Coca - Cola Bottling Company - your tremendous financial support is very very much appreciated.

Mr. Sadler - of Alberton Steel Windows - thank you for having made these windows available to us at cost.

I thank Messrs. Barkhuizen and Hyde of Golden West Flooring for donating 500 yds of tiles to us and for making the balance available at a very reasonable cost.

Mr. D. Christellis - the Reinforcing Engineer - I thank him for aid in this building.

Mr. L. de Swardt - the Architect - we are truly indebted to you for the tremendous aid afforded to us and I am certain that all will agree that one would have to go a long way to surpass the layout of this building.

Messrs. Hunt Leuchars and Hepburn are thanked for the facilities made available.

A very big indebtedness has accrued to Messrs. Pepsi Cola for the support given to us in the past and promised in the future, - Mr. Soble of Pepsi Cola - thank you for the sincere way in which you have aided us.

Last but not least you are all aware that we had to raise a bond for the completion of this building for which I express my sincere thanks to the Head Office Board, Mr. Lee the General Manager and the local Co-Directors of the Prudential Equity Building Society for having made available a bond under very difficult financial conditions.

I thank my committee for its loyal support in the achievement of our goal and in particular - I feel I would not be doing my duty if I failed to mention the name of one committee member, Mr. Kalivitis who did the electrical work in his spare time grateously. He worked every Saturday and Sunday for the past 4½ months to manage completion of his work.

I also mention with all sincerity the name of one community member, - Mr. Michael Patsis for having done a great amount of the carpentry in his spare time. He worked weekends and at night to manage.

I thank you ladies and gentlemen and I am sure that this Centre will bring each and every one of us much joy from its use.